A DOMESTIC DIFFICULTY.

BY EVELYN EVERETT-GREEN,

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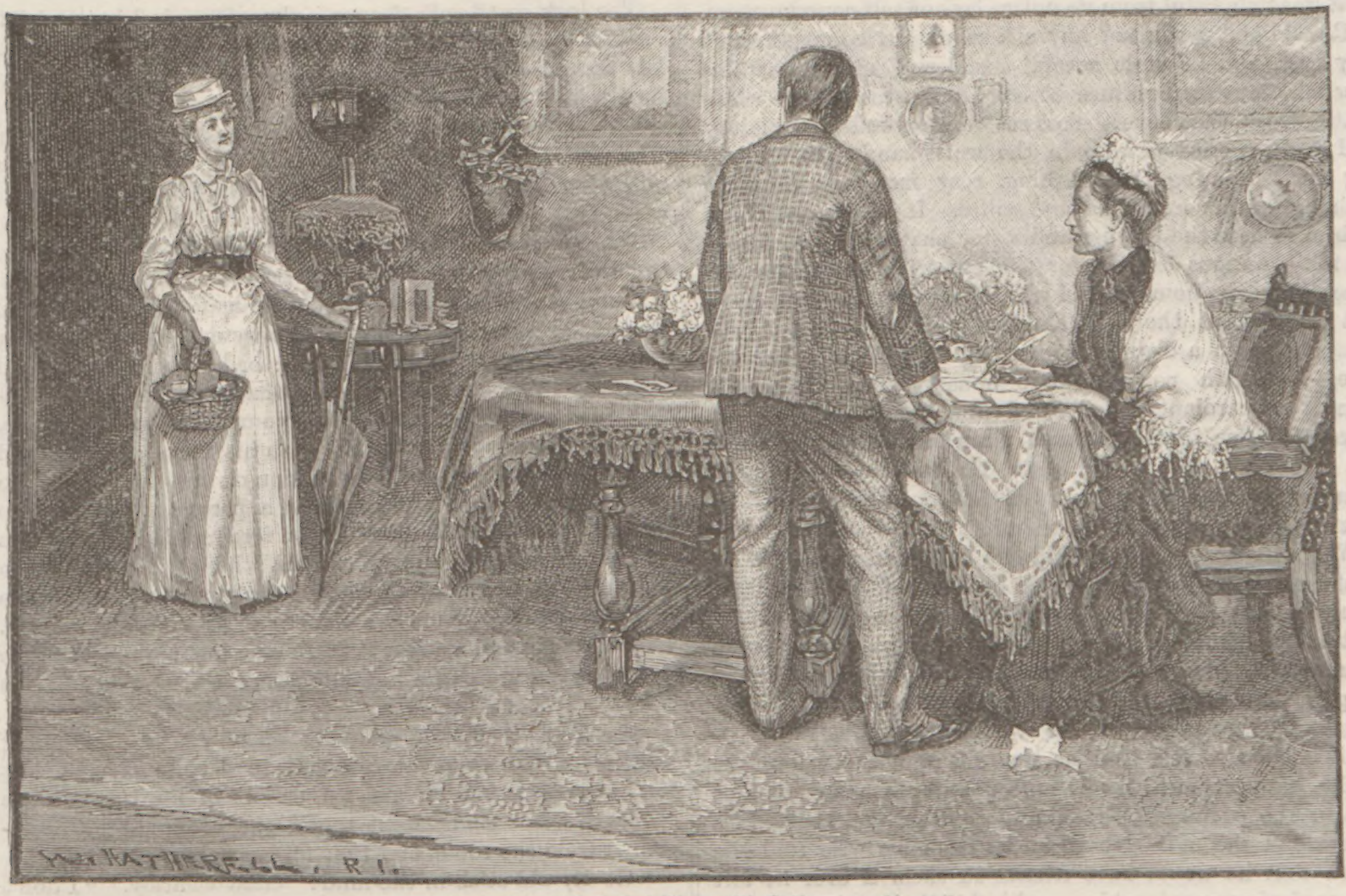

"I am going to see the old folks, mother." *p.* 115.

CHAPTER II.

THE STRANGER.

"I TRUST I see you somewhat recovered. We were really quite in despair at your absence from the family circle last night—weren't we, Conny? I am afraid you enjoy very bad health, as the old women say. Are you sure you ought to be up so early? Do let me recommend breakfast in bed, or even lunch also, if you are not equal to the fatigues of the day."

Conny had much ado to keep her laughter from rippling over. There was something comical in Charley's manner, even when his words were not amusing in themselves, and so much family wit had been expended on the subject of the molly-coddle that it was hard to keep a grave face when he was the person addressed.

Ronald had met the twins out in the garden shortly before breakfast. He certainly did not appear very robust; he was a marked contrast to Charley, with his bronzed cheek and tanned neck. His eyes had a tired look, as though he had not slept much, and his face was almost paler than it had been the afternoon before; but his manner was perfectly collected, and the way in which he lifted his hat as he returned Conny's hand-shake almost sent her off into a peal of mirth. "Company manners with a vengeance," she thought to herself; "I wonder if he will be like that all day."

"Thank you very much, but on the whole I think I will wait a little longer before following that prescription. What a pretty old-fashioned garden you have here! I wish I knew the names of half the plants in it. One hardly realises how many flowers there are in the world until one sees them blooming as they do here."

"Oh, yes, we are great people for flowers; it is mother's hobby," answered Conny, to whose care and personal attention a great deal of the glory of the long herbaceous borders was due. She liked people to notice her flowers; but somehow Ronald's admiration was put down to a desire to patronise her and her pursuits, and though in answer to his questions she rattled off a long list of long names, she felt rather bored all the while, and inwardly voted it a shame that her early stroll before breakfast with Charley should be broken in upon like this. Conny always said that she did not know how to talk to young men. She was not the least little bit of a flirt, and would any day have rather been thrown into the society of women than of men. She felt contemptuously towards this tall youth, in the irreproachable tweed suit and leather gaiters. He made Charley's easy garments look so very baggy and shapeless. Conny, though very simply dressed, always managed to carry an air of dainty finish about her, which was achieved without the least effort. She could, therefore, appreciate the same look about other people; but in this particular case a feeling of perversity made her disposed to criticise rather than to admire it. She would not let Ronald carry the basket which she was filling with flowers for the vases, and thought it ridiculous of him to suggest it, though perhaps had he not done so she might have found fault with his manners. It will be gathered from all this that Conny was no more

free from whims and caprices than are most young girls of seventeen; but it must also be admitted that she carried off her little perversities with a marvellous grace, and a piquancy that was delightful from its entire lack of self-consciousness.

Ronald had never had any sisters or girl companions of any kind, and he stole several wondering glances at this bewitching young creature beside him, in the simple white cotton frock, that nevertheless seemed so wonderfully dainty and fresh, a crimson rose in the waist-band; the clustering curls framing the laughing, rosy face, sometimes so arch and again so petulant and wilful. It was a revelation to him to hear the brother and sister chatter together, and he felt a curious longing for the power to enter into the inner life of the household of which he was to be a member; but as soon as the wish had entered his mind, it was dismissed with a sigh as something altogether unattainable, for, with perhaps more honesty than discretion, Ronald's guardian had allowed him to read the entire correspondence that had taken place between himself and Mr. Callender, and, as we know, that gentleman had felt bound to mention the foibles of his family and their youthful aversion to strangers.

When Ronald had heard this he had been very ill, or at least so utterly worn out and over-tasked that the last thing he had cared for was to be one of a merry family party. It seemed to him that if he must go somewhere, a household of this kind would suit him admirably. He could keep quietly out of the way. That he was to have his own private rooms was part of the stipulation, and it would be really a boon to feel that he was not wanted to join the family, save at meal-times, and possibly for an hour or two in the evening. The kindly tone of Mr. Callender's letters and the motherly messages from his wife told the youth that he would have friends in them if ever he felt the need of companionship; and in his then state of health and spirits it seemed a capital thing that the young people of the house would make something of a stranger of him, and had been one of the inducements which had led him to acquiesce in his guardian's plans.

But during the weeks which had been spent in negotiation, Ronald had recovered part of his strength, and though still something of an invalid, was not in the state of physical and mental prostration he had been in just after the conclusion of his examination. Though naturally shy and reserved, and unused to the companionship of young people —for at college his life had been exceedingly lonely—he was not exactly unsociable, and he had considerable curiosity on the subject of that family life from which his orphaned position had always excluded him. He began to think that he should not wish to be always an outsider, and especially was he attracted towards the sunny-haired Conny and the merry sailor lad; but after what he had heard, how foolish it was to hope to be anything else!

The breakfast gong summoned them to the house, where Mr. Callender read prayers to the assembled household, after which the party adjourned from hall to dining-room for breakfast. There were kind greetings for the guest from the master and mistress, more off-hand ones from the other son and daughter, and then the merry family banter began once more, plans for the day were discussed, laughter and chaff were exchanged, and save that Mr. and Mrs. Callender occasionally addressed a question or an observation to him, Ronald might have never been present for all the notice he got. Only at the conclusion of the meal did Claud address him, and then it seeemd in a rather perfunctory fashion.

"Oh, by the by, Kennedy, do you fish?"

"No—at least, not often. I do not care about it, thank you."

The look on Claud's face was almost comical in its visible relief. He was going fishing with a friend, and his fear lest the guest might come and spoil their sport almost spoke for itself.

"What would you like to do?" asked Mrs. Callender, who, with all a mother's indulgent feeling, had nevertheless a misgiving that her children were showing rather a want of manners.

There were several things Ronald would rather have liked to do. He would have liked to go round the home farm, if Conny would have taken him. He had gathered that she made the pilgrimage of the place every day to see after her calves and chickens and other pets; or he would have found it pleasant to lounge about in the shade of the quaint, old-fashioned garden, watching the young life of the house, and gradually growing friendly with his hosts. But he had an instinct that any such proposition on his part would be received coldly and looked upon as a bore, and he was too sensitive to endure the thought of forcing himself where he was not wanted, so, after a moment's hesitation, he said he would go to his room—he had a letter to write—and he saw a smile of derision cross more faces than one as Mrs. Callender expressed a fear that the headache was not quite gone yet, and he could not altogether reassure her on the point.

It would be rather hard to explain why the young Callenders were so much disposed to despise Ronald, just for the reason that he was rather out of health; but the monosyllable "muff" went round the group as he disappeared from the room, and they all heaved a sigh of relief.

"Go it, old stick-in-the-mud!" cried Charley. "I don't think he'll bother us much, anyhow. Come along, Conny, we'll have our morning's amusements in peace. The farm first, and then some tennis. I want to get my hand and eye in before the garden parties begin."

"Well, I've got to go and see a few old people in the parish presently," answered Conny; "but there will be Clara to play with you. I've been rather shabby about my duties since you've been home, Charley, but I must get into better ways again."

Ronald, as he went to his room, heard both the remark and the rejoinder, and he sat down by his open window and went off into a reverie, in which his books and his letter were alike forgotten.

Ronald Kennedy, as has been said before, was a rich man, or would be one when he came into possession of his property a year hence. He had an old manor-house, with a considerable amount of land around it, waiting for him to come and look after; and hitherto he had thought very little upon the subject of his duties as a landlord, or the claims of the poor upon him. For fourteen years—ever since the death of his father—the property had been let, and his guardian had attended to all the needful business. Ronald dimly remembered his childhood's home, with its stately terrace, clipped yew trees, and the great fish ponds, which had been the delight of his infant heart.

For years he had hardly thought of the old place, but he was thinking of it now. He was wondering if it might not be his duty to go and live there some day, and wondering what life there would be like.

It was a few chance remarks that had passed between Mr. and Mrs. Callender at breakfast which had roused this train

of thought. They had been talking of one or two people—talking as if intimately concerned with their affairs, and once Mrs. Callender catching his eye had said smilingly to him,

"They are our tenants, and they are in some trouble. We always like the people to come to us, and feel that they are cared for; but it is not easy always to know how to advise them for the best. Too much dependence pauperises and demoralises them, and yet it is right to help them within certain limits. Landlords' duties are not always the easiest in the world."

That was all; but it was enough to set Ronald thinking. He was by nature reflective and grave, and just now he had more cause than ever for serious meditation. Hitherto study had been the great delight of his life, and his dream had been to pass a brilliant examination, and then to settle down in Oxford, in luxurious rooms of his own near to the college he called his own, and give himself up to a life of research, adding perhaps, from time to time, some scholarly work or treatise to the accumulated store of ages. But the strange loss of power which had followed close application to his books previous to his examination had opened his eyes to the knowledge that such a life as that was not one suited to him. His doctor had told him very plainly that he must not attempt much study for several years to come, and that he ought to lead, as far as possible, an out-door life, living in the country, riding, driving and shooting, instead of poring continually over his books. He had a head that would not stand the strain of excessive application, and a nervous system that would easily get unhinged if liberties were taken with it. Ronald had been obliged reluctantly to admit that he had been in a very nervous excitable state for some time, and that he had suffered much from an incessant headache that nothing really relieved, and after his examination had been passed—and passed brilliantly—he had been so completely prostrated that he had been obliged to acquiesce in the doctor's verdict and give up all attempt at work, even agreeing to banishment from Oxford for the Michaelmas term, greatly though he disliked the long interruption to his studies.

Harder still was the feeling that his whole scheme of life had been overset. He had hitherto scarcely allowed himself to dwell upon the future at all; but as he sat at his open window, and looked out over the sunny landscape, he began to wonder if, after all, he too might not have duties awaiting him elsewhere, and whether he might not be really better employed in looking after his own property and tenantry than in shutting himself up in a world of books, and indulging his love of study to the exclusion of all human interests.

He had plenty of time for meditation during that and the following days; for he spent them mostly in the seclusion of his own room, morbidly conscious that he was not wanted in the family circle, and too much troubled with his head to be really desirous of company just yet. The extreme heat of the weather was against him, and the glare of the sunshine drove him indoors when he did try to show himself in the garden. On Sunday he was obliged to leave the church in the middle of the service, and though nothing could exceed the motherly kindness of Mrs. Callender, who was really concerned at his state of health, he was perfectly conscious that the young people regarded him as a hopeless muff, and this knowledge had the natural effect of making him shrink closer and closer into his shell.

Rest and quiet, and freedom from the strain of study were, however, doing him good, and he soon felt decidedly better and stronger; but, as he discovered, habits once formed are not easy to break through. He was supposed to prefer spending the day alone in his rooms and only appearing at meal-times; and from sheer diffidence and the desire not to obtrude himself where he was not wanted, he continued to retire thither when he would often have preferred being elsewhere; and his continued exclusion of himself gave rise to increased derision in the minds of the prejudiced young people, and the master and mistress began to despair of ever seeing them amalgamate.

"Clan C. wants shaking together in a bag," remarked the father, one day, "and making thoroughly disgusted with themselves and each other. The way those boys and girls hang together and despise everybody else is quite absurd. They are laughed at for it already—and really what is pardonable and even desirable in young children becomes a nuisance when carried into adult life. They do behave shamefully to Ronald, who is really a very nice young fellow, and how to make them see it or to act differently I do not know; but I am often very vexed with them."

"Well, we will hope Ronald does not notice or mind much. He does not seem to be much accustomed to young people or their ways, so possibly he is not aware that he is left out in the cold. And latterly he has taken to sitting a good deal with me in the morning room. We get on very well together."

Ronald had taken a great liking to Mrs. Callender, and when in the mood for company often went to sit with her. He helped her with her accounts, or read to her when she was at work with her needle, and when drawn out by her motherly questions told her more about himself than he had ever told to anyone else. He was sitting beside her one morning, helping her over a blunder in one of her household books, when Conny came in with her hat and gloves on and her basket over her arm.

"I am going to see the old folks, mother," she said. "Have you any special message or anything to send?"

"Are you going alone? Are you going to walk?"

"Oh, yes, it is not hot to-day; the sun is not shining, and Charley has gone fishing with Claud, for a wonder. It's a capital day for me; and I've promised to take all the dogs, if they will not chevvy the old women's precious cats."

Conny laughed, as she stood swinging her basket by its handle, and looking the embodiment of youthful health and grace. At least, so thought Ronald as he suddenly made a step forward.

"Miss Conny—will you let me go with you? I should so enjoy the walk—and that basket looks too heavy for you."

Conny almost laughed as he took it from her. She was nearly saying that it was she who ought to carry things for him, not he for her; but some instinct of good breeding checked her, and her natural sweetness of disposition saved her from raising any objection to the escort, though she secretly thought her morning would be spoiled. But to her surprise it was not spoiled at all, and she found that her companion really could talk when he was not surrounded by a number of hostile critics, and that he was very much interested in a number of things that interested her, and about which she knew more than her sister or brothers.

Conny had from a child loved the poor and had been her mother's almoner to the tenants, while Clara had voted such visits a bore, and had preferred to read and draw at home. When questioned about the people and the place, she answered fully and freely, and found that her companion was not making talk to suit her, but was really and deeply interested in the subject, and anxious for information on his own account.

Conny possessed, in no small degree, the gift of true sympathy, and when she understood that he really cared for her poor people, she launched out into minute histories of them and their condition, which led to many useful items of information to the young land-owner, and the morning sped away only too fast. Conny lost all her saucy raillery, and really thought that Ronald was much nicer than she had believed before. She liked his gentle, courteous way to the old people they visited; she admired the fashion in which he lifted his hat to the women at the cottage doors, with whom she exchanged friendly nods, and there was something rather agreeable after all in his polished courtliness towards herself. Ronald's manners had lost their first stiffness without losing any of the grace and good breeding which had been instilled into him from his nursery days. He had never been permitted to fall into the free and easy ways of modern young people, and though Conny had laughed at his stateliness once, she began to admire it secretly, and to come to the conclusion that if only the boys would not laugh at her, and Clara turn up her nose, she would not mind making friends with the stranger if he cared to make friends with them.

At any rate the walk was pleasant, and so was the talk about dogs at the close; and Conny found that Ronald knew as much about her four-footed friends as she did herself, and was quite as fond of them, and as they made friends with him one and all, and seemed delighted to run after sticks thrown by him, the girl came to the conclusion that after all he must be rather nice—dogs always knew.

Perhaps there was really a deeper reason than that at the root of Conny's change of feeling; for in returning, as they passed the church she had offered to show it to him, as it boasted some fine brasses and monuments, and she was struck by the quiet reverence of his manner when inside, as well as by his remarks on coming out.

"Is your church always open?" he asked.

"Yes, this door is kept always unlocked. Our vicar likes the people to have the liberty to come in at will. He says that God's house is theirs, too, and that whether or not they use the privilege, they ought to have the free right of entrance."

"Indeed, I believe he is right," said Ronald, quickly and earnestly; "God's house *ought* to be ours too, not on Sundays alone, but every day of the week. Of course, God is in every place alike, one can never doubt that for a moment; and yet, I suppose, because our faith is weak, it is hard always to realise it, and the hallowed calm of His special sanctuary becomes the more welcome, seeming to turn our thoughts heavenwards. One cannot tread the dim walks of the hallowed acre—God's acre—without feeling that death is ever near and round us. The more need for us to be ever looking towards the land where it cannot come."

The words were spoken slowly and dreamily, as though for a minute he had forgotten the presence of his companion—as indeed he had. He recalled himself with a start and a quick blush, but Conny's face was full of comprehending sympathy, and he felt that he was not despised; whilst she decidedly liked him the better.

Possibly, Conny might have been able to infect Charley with her revulsion of feeling towards the stranger but for an untoward incident of that very same evening—no more and no less than a violent thunder-storm. It came on whilst the family sat at dinner, and when the vivid flash of lightning was followed instantly by a crashing peal of thunder, it was noticed that Ronald turned deadly pale, and that his hand shook so that the salt to which he was helping himself was spilt upon the table-cloth.

"Thunder affects you, I see," said Mr. Callender, cheerfully. "Well, it is too violent to last; but if you would prefer to go down into the cellar or anything like that——"

The next words were drowned in the crash of another peal. Ronald shook his head; but without smiling, and his face was whiter than ever. To see a man so affected by thunder struck the young Callenders as something inexpressibly comic, and they could hardly restrain their mirth, though Conny did really try, because she reasoned that he could not help it, and that it was unkind to laugh over what was a physical infirmity. But when the storm passed Ronald did not recover himself, and went early to his room, and Mrs. Callender, who followed him, rather uneasy at his wan looks, came down presently looking rather grave herself.

"No, children, you ought not to laugh. It is not fear that makes poor Ronald feel a thunder-storm so much. He tells me that it was in just such a storm that his mother died, fifteen or sixteen years ago, and—but you will only laugh if I tell you."

"No, we won't, mother, dear," said Conny, "I promise."

Mrs. Callender was sufficiently imbued with the clan feeling to like to share everything with the children.

"Well, it may not sound much as I tell it; but you should have heard him. It seems that he had been sent away to an aunt's house during his mother's illness, as it was not certain whether it was infectious, and he did not know that she was considered very ill. Indeed, the end came before anyone was prepared for it. The child was sleeping quietly, when he was roused by the violence of the thunder-storm. He had just sat up in bed and was going to call out, when he suddenly saw his mother enter the room and come towards him with outstretched arms. He put out his arms to her, and then there was another blinding flash of lightning and roar of thunder; and when he opened his eyes she was gone; and the clock outside struck two. In the morning he heard that at two o'clock his mother had died, holding out her arms and speaking his name. Since then he has always been very strangely affected by thunder-storms, and I do not wonder—whether what he thought he saw were a dream or delusion or what not."

The Callenders did not laugh then. Their mother's gravity affected them somewhat, and so did the story itself; but as the feeling of awe passed off, another one began to take its place, and presently Claud leaned forward and whispered to Charley—

"I say—if that noodle of a fellow really believes in ghosts, we can get a splendid rise out of him one of these days."

(*Continued on page* 129.)

KITH AND KIN IN THE OUTER CIRCLE.

BY SARAH TYTLER.

The Mother-in-Law, the Wife's Mother.

THE introduction to the connection between mother-in-law and son-in-law is not so stormy as the preface to the connection between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. Surely the son-in-law could not always have looked askance at his future mother-in-law. Such was not his attitude when he first came wooing her daughter—in his love for whom he must have felt some reflected regard for the woman who bore her, and reared her, whom she probably resembled in many points. In those days his anxiety to stand well with the mother was only next in degree to his fervent desire to stand well with the daughter, and every mark of esteem and liking on the mother's part filled him with sincere gratification and gratitude. What has changed all this, and left the once friendly man in a position to point a moral and adorn a tale, a pessimist moral, and a would-be funny tale? What has brought him to the pass of attributing the lowest, meanest motives to his wife's mother, of regarding her as a licensed harpy—at best a silly, intrusive, mischief-making woman? It is impossible for him in the name of common decency to forbid her his house, and so to put her down and stamp her out. He must endure her, but she is the fly in his ointment, the Mordecai at his gates, the marrer of his peace, and the spoiler of his happiness. In order to effect this grievous transformation there must be something more in fault than the light literature of the day, whether at its brightest and best, or at its dullest and poorest. There must be some foundation, however exaggerated and distorted, for the manifold accusations brought in jest or earnest against the decried mother-in-law. Some provocation (unwitting, and unconscious it may be) to the thousand and one diatribes uttered against her must owe its existence to the very mother's love which is so piteously sacred in her own eyes and in those of her daughter. If so, the cure of the evil reputation is largely in the hands of the slandered person. If apprehensive love, and not pride and vanity, if over-anxious affection, and not a dictatorial, meddlesome temper, or a passion for power, lie at the root of the offence, then it not only bespeaks forbearance and sympathy, it ought with a little consideration and firmness to accomplish its own cure.

"She cannot have a safer confidante." p. 119.

When a mother sees her daughter married she ought to be convinced—if she has not been convinced before—

that the daughter can stand alone—that is in all womanly duties and responsibilities. If she has not so stood before, it is high time she should. No bolstering up on her mother's part will do any good beyond a certain point. It will simply serve to render both ridiculous. It is true enough that the mother has all the experience which the daughter lacks, and that the experienced parent may be willing and eager to put it at the service of her ignorant offspring—nay, that the grown-up child may still cling to the mother and seek not her advice only, but her practical aid in every difficulty. It may go to the heart of the mother to refuse it in any form, just as it may inflict on her a stab to find that her daughter, who was wont to rely upon her in every particular—to do nothing, from buying a frock to accepting an invitation, without seeking her counsel—can do without her, can arrange her affairs, and arrive at her conclusions—not unsupported, certainly, but apart from her mother's intervention.

But if the mother is wise, not weak, if her love is the highest and best kind of love which rejoices in the welfare of the creature she loves, without any thought of her own share in it, she will not only accept the situation, she will be glad of it, glad with a sigh as well as a smile, possibly, but still glad as the most promising indication for all the persons concerned, in their new and more complicated relations.

Experience must be earned, not borrowed; no mother, however devoted, can transfer to her daughter the unalloyed results of her own struggles, blunders, failures, and successes. The young woman must learn for herself, bearing to a great extent her own burden of perplexed trouble and halting difficulty. If she does not she will be perplexed and halting all her life long. She will still be a foolish child when she should be a middle-aged woman.

If a young wife cannot manage her house and guide her servants without her mother's constant supervision and backing, she had better sit for a season at the feet of her own servants and acquire from them the useful knowledge with which she ought to have been provided to start with. Better this humiliating resource than to run every moment to her mother, and either by speech or writing be dragged over the obstacle in her path.

If the youthful matron cannot receive company, and entertain her own or her husband's friends, without throwing the entire responsibility on her mother and leaving to her all the calculations and exertions implied, then, "the young madam," as she was called a hundred years ago, had much better leave ordinary hospitality and the simplest party-giving alone, till she can undertake them on her own account. It is not enough that the mother should skilfully veil her performances and keep herself modestly in the background, when she has been the principal actor in the play. Nobody is deceived by such make-believes. Everybody guesses the truth, and makes his or her comment. Nobody gets any credit, and the novice in house-keeping is deprived of a lesson which might have been of essential service to her.

It is not intended to suggest that the sweet, strong interests between mother and daughter should ever die, simply that they should be kept within reasonable bounds and never permitted to trespass upon the rights and obligations of others.

Amongst the poorer classes the prolonged dependence of the married daughter on the mother, and the unstinted devotion of the mother are often, I am sorry to say, sources of injustice and wrong. The daughter will appeal to the mother in every season of adversity. She has sometimes no conscience as to what she will ask and take, until she has deprived the mother of her little savings, the provision for her old age. The daughter will, without shame or scruple, permit the mother to become a mere drudge to her child or her child's children—while the mother, in order to meet the fancied necessity, will weakly and unfairly sacrifice the comfort and prospects of her husband and her other children (who may seem, at the time, more independent of her), in order to comply with the requirements of this encroaching, inconsiderate child.

There is a time and a season for everything under the sun, the wise man proclaims. Thus there is a time and a season for a daughter's dependence on her mother, and a mother's devotion to her daughter, and a time and a season when such dependence and devotion do not cease to exist, but take an entirely different character.

I have written up to the present moment in view of the interests of mother and daughter. I must now write in the interest of the husband. No man means to marry a doll or perpetual child. Neither does he mean—however much good-will he may have felt for her up to the date of his marriage with the daughter—to marry his mother-in-law. Every man likes to have his wife and his house to himself, and he is peculiarly aggrieved, unless he be a man of an exceptionally philosophic or sweet temper, by any tale-bearing out of the house, or habitual tittle-tattle with regard to his actions. He wishes, rightly, to be undisputed master in his house, and he does not care that its laws and rules should be grafted from the practice of another household. He has soon a vivid perception that these laws and rules were enacted to suit the opinions and habits of another man, and however excellent in themselves, do not exactly fit him and his wants. His father-in-law may have been all his life an early riser, may have consistently preferred prayers before breakfast to after breakfast, may have swallowed his plateful of porridge before his toast and bacon, may have demanded that his egg be hard-boiled, may have been willing to dine or sup on cold meat one day out of the seven, may have insisted that he and all his belongings should be in bed every night by ten o'clock; while the son-in-law may not be an abnormally early riser, may choose to have prayers after breakfast, may detest porridge, may refuse to touch an egg unless it is under-boiled, may have a pronounced aversion to cold meat at any time, may have a fancy to sit up till eleven—all without being a hardened reprobate, so why should any attempt be made to bring him round to another man's habits and tastes? Why should his mother-in-law inculcate on his wife that these habits are wisest and best, nay, are the only wise and good habits and tastes, and must perforce be adopted, though the adoption imply thrusting on a free and independent British subject practices that are antipathetical to him? Let his mother-in-law mind her own business, and leave him and his wife alone; for one man's meat is another man's poison.

The gist of the matter is, that the married daughter represents another husband and another household. Her mother ought, even with the best intentions, to be wary and chary, from the earliest days of that household's existence, of imposing on it foreign ordinances. She should, in fact, respect and uphold its individuality, to the extent of now and then learning a lesson from it, instead of seeking to make it and its master servile copies of her own. New men, new laws; young life will have its day, its enterprising adventurous day. Old conservative plans—unexceptionable and unapproachable to the seniors—will not do for the

juniors. A great deal of gradual coolness in trifles, and of dawning bickerings, might be spared if such cautions were more carefully observed.

Little differences will arise between the most honestly attached couples. Many more in the first than in the last years of their union, those who ought to know best are not slow to declare. In these first slight estrangements, a mother-in-law can, in many instances, do much to prevent or to precipitate the danger. The daughter may fly to her mother and pour out her half-imaginary trials and injuries in the old familiar way, to the old, untiring listener, who is also a married woman, who has been a young wife, too, in her day, who will feel with and for the supposed victim. It is not altogether loyal in the young wife to have a confidante at all, but apart from that, she cannot, on the whole, have a safer confidante than her mother, if only all mothers were wise, fair and prudent, if they were not blindly, grossly partial. But let them rest assured of this, no good young wife and daughter will think the worse of her mother for making the best of things, or will resent the opposition when the mother sees her way to taking the husband's part—on the contrary the wife will be secretly flattered and pleased in the midst of her small flutter of hasty resentment.

I have heard that there are mothers-in-law who, in order to keep their footing in their married daughters' houses, make it a matter of policy to agree with the daughters' husbands in all disputes. However much, or however little the husbands are deceived, or however admirable the plan may be as a method of preserving an outward appearance of friendliness, I cannot say that I admire it, or feel inclined to advocate conduct maintained "as a matter of policy." But as a matter of principle, which is a very different thing, in cases where no questions of right or wrong are involved, in full recognition of the divine obligation which constitutes the husband the head of the wife and the master of the family, I would have every faithful, kindly mother-in-law defer gracefully and graciously to her son-in-law, in this, as in all else, showing a good example to her daughter. I do not believe that if the mother-in-law will act in such a spirit, there can be anything save mutual respect and regard between her and a worthy son-in-law.

HOW JEM'S LITTLE WIFE DID HER DUTY.

BY A. STUART FLETCHER.

"YES, mum; he's married a doll, has my Jem! Let me see, it's sweet you like it, isn't it?" and Mrs. Peters paused, sugar-tongs in air, before dropping a third lump into her visitor's tea-cup.

The visitor coughed apologetically, "Yes, I take three, if you don't mind. But your daughter-in-law, she's very pretty, isn't she?"

Mrs. Peters pursed her lips grimly and gave her head a little toss. "Oh, she's pretty enough, that's the only thing the men look for, it's my belief," forgetting that her own husband had at least been an exception; "but prettiness won't keep house.

"Look at Martha Ann Dobson, now," she continued, handing her visitor the cake. "Why, they hadn't been married a year before her husband hurt his right hand so that he couldn't work, and what did Martha Ann do but set to work and take in dressmaking and kept the house together all the ten months he was laid up, so that you wouldn't have known any difference. That's the sort of wife for a man to have, I say."

"Oh, yes, certainly," coughed little Mrs. Brown, timidly; "but there are other things a woman can do besides dressmaking."

"Well, Janie can't do 'em then; why, beautiful cook as you are you'll never believe it, but she can't even make a pudding! No, I say Jem's married a doll, and nothing else!"

"Dear, dear, that is serious, certainly," said kind Mrs. Brown; "wasn't that someone at the door?"

"Oh, no, it's only the latch doesn't catch properly. Let me give you another cup."

There had been someone at the door, for all that; someone with a bright, laughing face, and curly hair that the summer breeze blew in little tendrils from under the white sun-bonnet. Someone with a new pink cotton dress put on for the first time, and brought to be exhibited to the new mother-in-law, Mrs. Peters.

But while this someone has lingered in the little porch to put the unruly hair straight and press down a crumpled width of the pink cotton, she had, half-unconsciously, listened to the conversation through the slightly opened door.

"A doll," she caught, then Jem's name, then the list of her own shortcomings; and the girl's bright face sobered, and releasing the latch softly, she turned away.

Down the garden walk between the tall rows of lilies and larkspur, across the white road, in at her own little green gate she went, and sat down in her own cottage porch to think.

"'A doll!' am I? I know Jem likes my pretty looks, he's told me so often and often. And I did mean to make him a good little wife! Every night when I say my prayers, I ask God to make me a blessing to Jem. He'll be coming home soon, I must go and get his tea ready."

Indoors, getting out the clean white table-cloth and the wedding china, the little wife went on with her thinking.

"It's quite true I couldn't do like that Martha Ann Dobson did. Who is she, I wonder? If Jem were ill, I would watch him night and day, nobody should be better nursed than he, but I couldn't make dresses and support him. Oh, dear! I wonder if it is true that I am a doll?"

A manly step was heard on the path, and the pink cotton fluttered out to meet Jem.

"Well, little woman," said good-tempered Jem, when the first salutations were over; "that's a pretty frock you've got on."

"I didn't make it myself, Jem," said the little wife, wistfully.

"No," said Jem, laughing, "I knew dressmaking wasn't in your line."

"And you don't mind it? Not even if you were ill and I couldn't do as Martha Ann Dobson, that your mother talks about?"

"I've heard of Martha Ann Dobson, too," said Jem, rather grimly; "but, please God, Janie, I shall be able to work for my little wife for many years to come. But now let's have tea, and we'll go and take a walk along the river path before sunset."

"There's no denying, you're getting a first-rate cook." p. 122.

But somehow, when it was ready, Jem did not make a very good tea. The table looked pretty, certainly, but the bread was dry, and that piece of bacon had appeared and reappeared for a week past, while, in talking, Janie had failed to notice that the kettle was not boiling when she made the tea.

"You haven't eaten much, Jem," said the young wife, as they rose.

"I don't seem to have much appetite to-night," said her husband; "and somehow cold bacon does pall upon a man after a while."

The river-path was very lovely in the soft summer evening, and as Janie leaned on her husband's arm and watched the long reflections of the trees in the clear water, she felt as if she ought to be very happy. Why wasn't she? Was it that she was beginning to suspect that after all she was not going to be the good little wife to Jem that she had hoped? However it was, when Janie kneeling by her bedside added to her simple prayer, "Please God, make me a blessing to Jem," there was a greater fervour about the petition than ever before.

Jem was gone to his work, and the cottage looking as neat as the proverbial "new pin," and now there was time to spare before dinner. By the way, what was there for dinner? Jem couldn't have that bacon again; what should she get? Oh, couldn't she make him a pudding, a meat pudding?

"I'll begin it at once, so as to have plenty of time," cried the little wife; "won't it be a nice surprise for him!"

She ran to the chest of drawers, where upon the shining mahogany stood a row of books, the young couple's library.

"Here it is, the cookery-book mistress gave me! I always thought it so pretty with the blue and gold cover, and the coloured plates of raised pies and salmon cutlets and lemon soufflè, whatever that may be. Now, where is meat pudding? Oh, I must run to the butcher's and get the meat first."

It was unfortunate that the butcher's stock was low, and that all he had to offer as at all suitable were some dried and tough scraps that no experienced housewife would have accepted. But Janie bore them off triumphantly and then, first putting on a large white bibbed apron, sat down to study the cookery-book.

"Take a sufficiency of flour, and half the quantity of shortening," it began.

"Oh, dear; how much is a sufficiency, and what shall I use for shortening? I do wish I had watched cook sometimes, but I was always busy upstairs when she was cooking. I might have asked her things, though."

"And here it says again, 'pepper and salt to taste,' and 'a flavouring of ketchup!' Well, I suppose I shall have to guess it."

Poor Janie! The morning passed all too quickly, but the pudding was made *somehow*, and tied in a basin. But the red-faced, flurried little cook was a very different person from the smiling wife Jem had been used to meet at dinner for the few mornings of their short married life.

I am afraid the pudding *was* a surprise to Jem, though not the nice one Janie had hoped. It turned out of the basin, that is, part of it did, the other refusing to be moved, a stodgy, floury mass, with hard little bits of tough, underdone meat amongst it.

Jem dined on bread and cheese, and left his wife with her face in her white apron weeping, and he pondered as he returned to work as to whether there had not been a little sense after all in his mother's remarks about Martha Ann Dobson. But how was he to have guessed? Hasn't every man the impression that cooking and such-like feminine graces come to women by instinct?

Janie dried her eyes by-and-by, and rose to clear away the remains of the meal, a very sad little woman. But she had spirit and common sense, as well as a very tender love for her husband, and she had learnt her lesson.

"However I may manage to get on without dress-making I *must* learn to cook my husband a decent dinner," she said to herself; "and I am afraid the cookery-book won't help me very much at present. Oh, dear, I expect Martha Ann Dobson could cook as well as dress-make. If I knew where she lived I'd go and ask her."

In the young woman's perplexity the thought of her

The Farmer's Daughter.

little prayer came to her. "Make me a blessing to Jem," she repeated reverently, "and help me to learn to cook."

The dinner plates were washed up, and the room in its usual order, when Janie suddenly bethought herself of Mrs. Brown.

"She seemed kind yesterday, and mother-in-law said she was a beautiful cook. I'll go and ask her; never mind if she does tell. I deserve something for being so ignorant and satisfied."

It would take too long to tell of all Janie's visits to Mrs. Brown, and of that good woman's delight in teaching her, and especially in keeping it all a secret from "mother-in-law" for the present, for the sake of a grand surprise by-and-by.

As for Jem, as the meat pudding failure was never repeated, but its memory obliterated by a long course of simple, cosy meals, he mentally begged his little woman's pardon, and felt confirmed in his original opinion of her many excellencies.

Summer went, autumn came, and then winter, and in the long evenings Janie pricked her fingers in her attempts to emulate Martha Ann Dobson's skill in dressmaking, while Jem read aloud to her from his seat by the fire.

The dressmaking could not be pronounced a success, as even good-natured Mrs. Brown was compelled to own. "But never mind, my dear," said thekind little woman, "it ain't everyone as has a talent for dressmaking. You can do plain work and mend for the home, and whilst your husband's strong and hearty there's no call for you to do more. And there's no denying, you're getting a first-rate cook."

Strong and hearty, yes, Jem was that, but when, riding the farmer's mare home from market one dark night, she was frightened and threw him, his brawny muscle and good digestion did not save him from fractured ribs and broken leg.

"Your husband has a fine constitution, and with good nursing and God's blessing we'll pull him through," said the doctor to Janie, adding as he went down the stairs, "but I'm sadly afraid it will be a long job."

Never had sick man a better nurse, never was sick-room cookery made more tempting to an invalid. Mrs. Peters herself, who loved her boy, owned it, and forgave her daughter-in-law. But weeks went on, and even months, and Jem was still unable to walk.

"There's some complication with the head," said the doctor to Mrs. Brown one day; "it may be months more before he is able to get about. Have they anything to live on?"

"Not much now, doctor; you see, they'd spent best part of their savings in furnishing. Farmer Spring's been very good in sending them things, and so has the Vicar, but if it's to last much longer I don't know what they'll do, that I don't." And the good woman wiped with her apron the tears that would flow.

"How soon am I going to get about again, doctor?" asked Jem at the next visit, and although the doctor tried to fence a little, the young man soon learned that the period of his convalescence even was a long way off. Poor fellow, as the door closed behind his visitor, he turned his face to the wall and sobbed.

"Oh, my little woman! my poor, pretty little woman, was it for this I married you, to lie here like a great hulk and ——" But here a soft little face bent over his own, and a sweet mouth kissed his forehead, and Janie's loving voice whispered:

"I know all about it, Jem; I made the doctor tell me. And you're not to fret one bit; I've such a splendid plan, just as good as Martha Ann Dobson's."

"A plan; what?" asked Jem, weakly.

"Never mind, now; go to sleep, and I'll tell you to-morrow."

That evening, as the doctor sat over the fire in his slippers after his day's rounds, his housekeeper ushered in "young Mrs. Peters." The doctor rose reluctantly, expecting to meet a tearful little woman bent on hearing more of her husband's case, which must only mean to her anxiety and grief. But to his surprise the little woman was by no means tearful; on the contrary, the young face in the neat bonnet had a bright, eager look in it.

"Doctor," began Janie, "would it hurt Jem, my husband, to be moved into the town now spring's coming?"

"Moved into town?" repeated the doctor in a puzzled voice. "No, I can't say that it would, but——"

"Because Jem's worrying about not earning, doctor; and I've a plan to keep us till he gets better. There's a little house in Prospect Place would just suit us, and I could let our cottage."

"A plan to keep you! Not by needlework, surely!"

Janie actually laughed.

"No, doctor; something I can do better than that! Why, sir, when Jem took me into town one day, the men from the factories were just coming out for their dinners and dozens of them turned into a little shop to buy something to eat. You should have seen the meat pies they bought; the paste was white and half baked, and the meat was dry. And there was a loaf in the window of such heavy-looking bread. I've thought of it often and often. And now, doctor, that I want to earn, I thought to myself, 'Why shouldn't I make those men some of the nice cheap dishes I make for my Jem?' I believe I could do it and make it pay."

The doctor's reply to this long speech could not have been discouraging, for a week or two after that the cottage in Prospect Place was opened. Nor was it long before the little front room was filled with customers, attracted in the first place by the savoury smell and the clean, attractive-looking little window, and further induced to enter by the sight of the neat white-aproned cook.

Daffodils and primroses came and went, cowslips and hawthorn followed, and country-loving Janie saw none of them, but she was a happy little woman for all that, for was not her Jem getting better every day, and was not the wolf kept from the door, and never a debt formed to be a burden to them when Jem was able to work again? And when the roses came in the cottage garden, the house in Prospect Place was given up to a successor in the business, and Jem went home.

They had tea at Mrs. Peters' that evening. Mrs. Brown was there, and the table was graced by a cake of Janie's making.

"Well, thank God, you've got over that hard time, Jem," said his mother, putting her customary three lumps into Mrs. Brown's cup.

"Yes, thanks to God, and my brave and clever little wife," said Jem, squeezing her work-hardened hand under the table.

"Yes, my dear, he's reason to be proud of you," said Mrs. Peters; "many a time have I said, 'she's equal to Martha Ann Dobson!'"

"And it all comes, my dear," added kind Mrs. Brown, "from your just learning to do your clear duty."

A VISIT TO ELBA.

PEOPLE do not make pilgrimages to Elba now as they did in that most eventful of years in the island's history, 1814-15. One marvels a little how the great Napoleon tolerated as he did the visits of inquisitive strangers from various parts of the Continent, and chiefly from England. It must have been at times as galling to him to be interviewed by an Englishman as one may imagine it is to a caged lion to be stared at in a menagerie by a crowd of peasants, who poke at it with their sticks and do all they can to make it growl and lash its tail, knowing full well, as they do, that the bars of the cage are of good sound iron. Yet he bore it, as a rule, serenely enough. He even out of politeness now and again professed an interest in his visitors; enquired after their families, their health, mode of life, and so on. But it is not difficult to surmise that, when the ceremony was at an end, the victor of Austerlitz sighed with relief as he betook himself, for a change, to the little marble seat under the laurels of a fountain in his Elban garden, or re-entered his little bedroom with a pattern of bees and crosses of the Legion d'Honneur upon the wall, whence he could see Italy in the distance.

Though only some ninety square miles in area, Elba would be considered a pleasant and not contemptible little property by anyone who had not at one time been an emperor. Certainly, as one approaches it from the mainland, its size seems to increase as one nears it, until it becomes almost oppressively large to the earnest tourist, who has but a couple of days on his hands in which to see the whole of it. It is made up of mountains high for so small an island, plains by the sea coast, and here and there a bright, red-roofed town. In all, its population is somewhat under twenty-five thousand souls, all of them so brown that there is no need to consult statistics to know that the summer is pretty warm here as well as on the mainland. In shape, it is a singular series of deep bays and corresponding headlands; so that when viewed from one of its peaks, it reminds one of the ostrich or the stork, which is all leg and neck and wing, and no body to speak of.

This very oddity of conformation, however, is one of its chief advantages. The capital, Porto Ferraio, for instance, would not be the excellent safe harbour it is, if nature had not thus helped man to make a port, which so doubles upon itself, that not even the most subtle of storms can do aught to disturb the peace of the vessels securely anchored in it. In fact, even when you are outside the inner harbour of the capital you are in a great land-locked bay, like a beautiful lake, with mountains on three of its sides and a lovely green and fertile plain at the base of the mountains. The headland of Porto Ferraio forms the fourth side to the bay, and the final passage into the open sea is relatively so narrow that it need not be taken into account.

The easiest way to get to Elba is to cross from Piombino by the little steamer which leaves daily in the afternoon with the mails. It is an absurdly small boat, of the size used on the Central African lakes as pioneers. This is a disadvantage if there is much sea, as there often is here, because of the race of water on the north-east side of the island; but it is a stout little craft, and though prone to roll from side to side like a walnut-shell under the same conditions, it may be trusted to land the traveller in Porto Ferraio before sundown.

Piombino is itself an interesting old place. It is remote from the railway, and has to be reached by a dolorous diligence ride through many a mile of corn-fields and olive woods. The diligence is very bad for people with sore bones. At the end of the journey one enters the town under some high dilapidated battlements, which tell of the days when Piombino was an independent principality. It is also strongly fortified on the coast, though truly the cruel rocks which so tightly press its tiny harbour are the best of protection against invasion. In the middle ages the family of the Appiani held sway in Piombino. They were even lords of Elba at one time; but not for long. In my rambles through the narrow white streets of the old town, I came suddenly upon a marble tablet in the wall which was as expressive as anything could be of the pleasures of existence in Piombino in those rough old days. "Here," said the inscription on the tablet, "under the sword of conspirators, the accomplices of his wife Isabella, fell dead Alessandro, first Duke Appiano, lord of Piombino, the night of September 29, 1590." No doubt the tablet is but one of many which might reasonably have been stuck about the town. Though the present people of Piombino seem quiet and amiable enough, they have an air of inherited savagery, which one fancies but little stimulus would suffice to excite into deeds quite as bad as that of the Duchess Isabella, who had her husband put to death on Michaelmas Day three hundred years ago. I daresay, however, I wrong them with the assumption. A tawny complexion, robust health and high spirits, with a trick of showing their admirable white teeth upon little or no provocation, are, somehow, suggestive of deeds of violence, or at least the ability to perform them.

The first thing one remarks upon setting foot on the pier of Porto Ferraio is the heavy, ugly, low buildings by the water-side to the right. These are the hulks, in which six or seven hundred convicts are accommodated. I saw some of them working, and their scarlet scull-caps glowed picturesquely in the mild yellow evening light. Italy uses most of her islands as receptacles for her rogues. Thus Elba, Pianosa, the Ponza Islands off the Neapolitan coast, and Sardinia, among others, keep the criminal element of the mainland quite successfully apart from the rest of the community. If I may judge from my experience of their treatment in Sardinia, by Cagliari, the Italian convict need not find his life so very irksome. There is work of many kinds for him to do, industrial and agricultural, and he is not forbidden to show a cheerful spirit if he feels in a state of exhilaration. Save as touching his freedom, it is probable the Italian convict lives quite as agreeably as some of the most impoverished of the denizens of Naples and the other large towns.

One perceives that Elba is a warm place by the quantity of the aloes and prickly pear which stud its fields and roadways, and also by the immensely broad brims of the straw hats worn by the men and women spudding at the vines. At nine o'clock in the morning on May 11, my bedroom in the Hotel Bees, of Porto Ferraio, registered 70° of heat. This, too, with a cool red-tile floor, and an aspect which kept the early sun quite aloof. I was further admonished of it by the activity of sundry mosquitoes which did their best to get at me in the night, and

Napoleon's Villa, San Martino.

trumpeted their wrath to each other at being foiled time after time by the meshes of the mosquito net. No doubt winter is the best time to sojourn in the island. The weather is then said to be "bellissimo." Napoleon himself testified to its geniality then. But he preferred not to stay for the summer a second year; evading the island for France on the 26th February, 1815, after a residence of about ten months.

My first evening in Porto Ferraio was sweetly calm and tranquillising. The golden twilight seemed to fill the neat little town for a considerable time, and afterwards it stayed on the scrub-covered hills to the south, which I could see from the hotel windows over the roofs of the lower houses. Immediately beneath me was a public square in which children were playing with many a shout, and to and fro across which a multitude of swallows were flitting in a most excited manner, as if in pursuit of a mosquito that defied all their gyrations in quest of its blood. At one end of the square was a white-faced church, and the organ pealed from within. I could see further the people on their knees in it, and the radiance of the lighted candles on its altar. It was in this same church that on the day of his arrival in Elba the clergy celebrated a solemn mass in honour of their "august Sovereign and Emperor, Napoleon," as they termed him. The exiled monarch stood before the eyes of his new and somewhat dull subjects while the service was performed. He is reported to have seemed very abstracted, and one can imagine that he was so. But the Elbans did not care to pry into the secrets of his imperial mind. It did not matter to them what he thought of them. It was enough that they had his sacred majesty in their midst. Even when he abandoned them without saying a formal "good-bye" they did not feel the less affection for him. They seem to have held him as a superior being, whose very nod was law. But on this evening there was, of course, nothing but the church itself to remind me of all this. A bell tinkled softly from another part of the town. The ships in the harbour (particularly two green-bodied Norwegian barques with cargoes of salt fish for the Elban Catholics) hung out their lights, which ran across the still waters of the bay like electric sparks. And up and down the cobbled square walked certain of the greater citizens of Porto Ferraio, arm in arm, enjoying the sweetest hour but one of the day—the hour preceding dinner. They discussed in loud voices with a considerable amount of friendly gesticulation; and the sound of their voices mingled with the sound of the children at play, the tinkling bell, the organ in the church, and the swishing of the excited swallows in pursuit of the inaccessible mosquito. I do not know when I felt in a more pacific mood than on this evening in Porto Ferraio under these various soothing influences.

There is one thing in Elba that no visitor is allowed to forget. That is the Villa of S. Martino, in which Napoleon spent most of his time when he was not engaged in riding about his restricted kingdom, or holding audience of the notables of Porto Ferraio in the unassuming white-faced house which was his town place of call and reception. The villa is not a bad little residence, though its somewhat grandiose additions since 1815 do not allow us to view it quite as it was three-quarters of a century ago. After Waterloo it came into the hands of the Demidoffs. The Prince Demidoff who first owned it respected the very ground Napoleon had trodden upon. He not only preserved the rooms of the villa as they were when Napoleon occupied them, but he built further the long, low, classical pile of buildings which first meet the visitor's eye as a sort of foundation for the villa itself. This building he used as a Napoleonic museum. As such it became famous; and, of course, there was abundant scope for furnishing it. Alas! however, for the hero-worship of the one Prince Demidoff. In due course he died. The villa property passed to another Demidoff, who did not think anything like so much of Napoleon as his uncle thought. The various treasures of the museum were accordingly, without scruple, and amid the groans of the Elbans, transported to Florence, and there sold by auction. They were thus dispersed about the world. As for the museum, it has since stood empty—a reproach to the name of Demidoff, and a rather melancholy illustration of the comparative worthlessness of any but the very noblest kind of glory.

The villa proper, however, is a very homely, snug little place. It belongs to a hospitable family of Italians, who are proud to show its contents to the appreciative tourist, from the bed in which Napoleon used to sleep to the table on which he used to eat his dinner. The big tree which casts such a shade over the front of the house from the terrace which it seems to monopolise is sacred. It was planted one day by Napoleon himself. If only one could give form to the many thoughts which the great emperor conceived

during his enforced sojourn here, the house would have a unique atmosphere. As it is, however, it is a nice cool little house, with its rose trees thick with blossom in the back garden, upon which the French windows of the dining-room open so prettily. This dining-room has one eccentric yet agreeable feature. There is a fountain in the middle of it. Goldfish swim in the bowl of the fountain; and one may thus in the dog-days doze in an armchair in the cool chamber, with the sound of falling waters aiding post-prandial slumber.

It was to San Martino that the emissaries from France and Italy in the emperor's interest came to tempt him to try his luck once more against the combined forces of Europe. He was sorely urged to leave Elba long before his discretion told him the time had really come. But he would not fetter himself by accepting any of the conditions of aid which those in authority thought well to put upon him. "It is imperative, sire," wrote the Italians, "to renounce for good and all, and sincerely, that course of universal carnage which follows in the train of conquests." This, of course, was admirable as moral doctrine; but Napoleon saw that he could not hope to reinstate himself without still more of that bloodshed for which his name was already so broadly execrated. And so he followed his own instincts alone, and when he left Elba he did it without a particular devotion of himself to any party. He claimed to fight for France, and to be concerned for the glory of France alone. And so from Elba he found his way to St. Helena.

Elba may be seen in its entirety from the stern mountain-top of Capanna in the south of the island. I call it stern because it really is very forbidding, and by no means easy of access. In height it is some 3,500 feet, the final few hundred feet of which are of smooth granite surface at a perilous angle. We got up them by a very careful use of the niches in the rocks where water or other forces had fractured them. On the summit is a cairn in which one may find a piece of paper upon which not more than a dozen names are pencilled. It must not be thought, however, that this is necessarily the complete list of the successful assailants of Monte Capanna. Only the natives would be likely to seek and find the paper.

From Capanna nothing is more remarkable in the prospect than the superb reach of Corsica's central mountains, their tops aglisten with snow. Below Corsica a subtle eye may discover something of Sardinia; but it is difficult to say where Corsica ends and Sardinia begins. At the base of the mountain is the pretty red-roofed village of Marciana, whence the visitors will probably have made the climb. It is a village unprovided with a regular inn; but if the traveller has fair fortune he may discover a portly, dark-browed, laughing dame, who, for a consideration (by no means a small one), will bed and board him. There is nothing in the nature of luxury in Marciana, unless it be the air, the pleasant beach upon which the sea ripples so gently, or the delightful aspect of Monte Capanna rising abruptly behind it, the peaks of which look really formidable from the sea-shore. To a stranger it is likely to be a dull enough little place. But if he can find entertainment in small matters, it is probable the mayor will be happy to play dominoes with him at the café on the Marina, and further indulge him with a glass of sirop or a cup of coffee. In the course of conversation his worship may show much amiability, if also much ignorance. He knows but little about England and its government. But, as he says, with a genial laugh after a question of more than common absurdity, what does it matter? England's connection with Elba is not likely again to be what it was in 1814. When another Napoleon comes into the island, then it will be time enough for him to take to the history and geography manuals.

Of the other villages of Elba I can say little; but they cannot be very interesting. The iron mines in the east of the island are still rich as in the times of the Romans; and the visitor is sure to be urged to set off to see them. For my part, however, I did not come to Elba to see iron mines. When I had sated myself with Napoleonic memories I had done with Elba. And so on the third day I rang the *electric* bell of the Hotel Bees, and asked for my bill. You see Elba is not so very laggard a little island. But though there was electricity in the hotel there was not even a suspicion of the speed of the electric spark about the little steamer which duly afterwards took me back to Piombino, and so to Rome. The sea was roughish, which did not agree with the Liliputian mail packet.

Marciana.

FOOD AND DRINK.

BY JOSEPHA CRANE,

Author of "The Art of Nursing," etc.

IV.—Eggs.

SO much has been ably said in this magazine concerning the value of vegetables and fruit as articles of diet that I omit these altogether in this short series of papers. This omission enables me, however, to say a good deal about a very important and much-used food, namely, eggs.

The average weight of a hen's egg is about two ounces avoirdupois, and it contains 200 grains of dry, solid matter. This is the composition of the entire contents of an egg:—

Nitrogenous matter	14·0
Fatty matter	10·5
Saline matter	1·5
Water	74·0
	100·0

White of egg contains a much larger proportion of water than the yolk. There is no fatty matter in the white, and it consists chiefly of dissolved albumen enclosed in very thin walled cells. The tastelessness of the white without the yolk is well known, and we remember the words in the Book of Job, "Is there any taste in the white of an egg?"

There is a great deal of sulphur in albumen, and we prove that fact constantly by noticing the blackening of a silver spoon when used for eating an egg. A putrid egg has a very unpleasant smell, and that is due to the sulphur which, combined with hydrogen, produces hydrogen-sulphide, or rotten egg gas. Dr. Parkes says:—

"Albumen varies greatly, according to the source from whence it is derived. Ovalbumen, as that from the ovum, or egg, is called, is an albuminate of sodium. . . . . It occasions a precipitate in solution of metallic salt, and therefore raw eggs beaten up are a most valuable household remedy against poisoning by salts of lead, mercury, and copper." All the fatty matter is accumulated in the yolk of the egg, and it amounts to as much as 30 per cent.; there is less nitrogenous matter than in the white; but the proportion of solid matter, owing to the fat, is very much greater.

Very much may be said in praise of eggs as food. With milk we can use them many ways, or the egg itself can be eaten raw, boiled, poached, and in omelets, soups, and in countless fashions. If you eat an egg with toast or bread and butter you make it go as far as if you ate five eggs by themselves. The starch in the bread and toast increases the quantity of heat-giving food contained in the yolk, and the albumen of the white and yolk is added to the valuable *gluten* of the bread and toast.

Very much of the quality of eggs depends upon the food given to the fowls. Certain foods give a marked flavour to the egg. The hens should not eat too many insects, and it may be remembered that herbs and grain make a better food for them than grain only.

Raw eggs and those lightly boiled are very easy of digestion. Hard-boiled eggs are not so easy, and are apt to produce constipation.

You can easily detect if eggs are fresh or not. When held up to the light, or to a lighted candle, if the egg looks clear it will be fairly good; if thick, it is stale; and if you can detect a black spot attached to the shell it is quite uneatable.

Unless you are certain about the freshness of your eggs, you should break them in a cup each separately, and then you can see if they are fresh. Indeed, it is safer always to do this. Some people have the very strange idea that though an egg should be fresh for boiling, it signifies little if used for puddings, etc., when tainted. A tainted egg should never be used at all, as it quite spoils whatever you are cooking with it.

You may often notice that eggs break instantly on being boiled, and this arises when you plunge the egg into a large quantity of boiling water. The heat makes the contents of the egg expand suddenly, and this causes the shell to give way. The best plan is to put it into only a small quantity of water, then the shells do not crack, because the temperature becomes reduced by the eggs before the interior expansion takes place.

If you want to keep eggs fresh for several weeks you should employ the following method:—

Take a large saucepan that can contain three or four quarts, and fill it with boiling water. Put your eggs—about twenty at a time—into a cabbage-net and hold them in the water. You must keep the water boiling, and let the eggs remain in for twenty seconds. Do this to all the eggs you desire to preserve, and then pack them all in sawdust. People who have tried this plan of preserving eggs vouch for its being satisfactory, and they say that at the end of two or three months they are good for culinary purposes. The white is found to be a little tougher than that of new-laid eggs, but the yolk is nearly the same.

Another plan is to smear the eggshells with butter or sweet oil. Then pack them in bran or sawdust, and do not let the eggs touch each other.

Fine weather is the time for storing eggs, and they should never be more than twenty-four hours old when packed away, or else their flavour when you use them cannot be depended upon.

A third method is to immerse the eggs in lime-water immediately after they have been laid, and then to put the vessel which contains them, lime-water and all, into an outhouse or cellar which is quite cool.

In towns it is often difficult to procure really new-laid eggs, and people who live in the country might often confer a real favour on their invalid town friends by sending them a few fresh eggs by parcel post. But if they do this, they should learn how to pack them properly. Many have been the boxes of eggs sent me which have arrived in a condition to make even unpacking them a very messy job. Once, I think, I secured three unbroken eggs out of seventeen; the remainder being either quite smashed or so cracked that the contents of the eggs had oozed out in all directions. One lady simply laid the eggs in a box, put a little paper loosely on the top, and left part of the box empty. The result is better imagined than described. Now it is perfectly easy to pack eggs so that they will travel easily and well. A light wooden box is better than tin, which is apt to get stoved in to the detriment of its contents. Cardboard boxes are not thick enough.

Wrap each egg round with a good deal of paper, and place them in the box, wedging in paper in every nook and corner, so that they cannot possibly move. They should be so tightly packed that eggs and paper are solid, and in this way they travel perfectly, and arrive intact. Cotton-wool or common wadding, is another way, but paper answers perfectly. It is well worth taking time and trouble about it, as it is disappointing to receive the eggs in a state not fit to use, and if they are a gift you feel a natural hesitation in criticising the donor's method of packing, and telling him how very unsuccessful it is.

Space forbids my giving a list of the many ways of cooking eggs, but I will mention a few very simple recipes, which I quote from a well-known work on cookery.

Eggs au Plat.—These are always served on the dish on which they are cooked. Butter a dish thickly with good fresh butter, and when it is melted break the eggs into it, sprinkling them with pepper and salt. Cut the remainder of the butter into small pieces and put it on the top of the eggs. Place the dish in the oven, and let it remain till the white becomes set, but not hard. Serve immediately, placing the dish or plate they were cooked in on another.

Eggs à la Maître d'Hotel.—Ingredients: A quarter pound of fresh butter, one tablespoonful of flour, half-pint of milk, pepper and salt, one tablespoonful of minced parsley, the juice of half a lemon, six eggs. Put the flour and half the butter into a stew-pan. Stir both over the fire until the mixture thickens. Pour in the milk, which should be boiling, and add the pepper and salt. Let all simmer for five minutes. Now put the remainder of the butter into the saucepan, adding the minced parsley. The eggs, which should be hard boiled and shelled, are now put into a dish, and when the sauce is at boiling point add the lemon juice, pouring it all over the eggs, and serve. This is enough for five persons.

The following was given me by a friend and is, I think, an improvement on the usual recipes:—

Œufs Brouilles au Jus.—Put a small piece of butter into a little saucepan and break two eggs into it, add salt and pepper, and cook them over a moderate fire, stirring all the time so as to mix yolks and whites well together. Add two teaspoonfuls of gravy. If you have not got this, make some gravy from Gravina, Liebig or Bovril and add a little salt to it. When the eggs are breaking into thickness they are cooked enough. A wooden spoon, rounded off at the edges, is the best for stirring this dish. The above can be varied in the following ways:—

Omit the gravy and use a spoonful or two of milk, or else you can take out the inside of a raw tomato (without the seeds) and mix it in with the eggs. A nice way, too, is to serve them on toast spread with bloater paste.

Another plan is to mix a very little grated Parmesan or other cheese with them, put them on toast and let them stand in front of the fire, having sprinkled a little cheese on the top. This browns very quickly if put close to the fire. You can brown this well in the reflector arrangement named in my last article, or in an ordinary Dutch oven.

You can easily get now in London a kind of earthenware pipkin—foreign I believe—which is fireproof. One very good way of cooking eggs is in one of these little pipkins, which can be had small enough for only one egg.

For one egg put a little piece of butter the size of a small walnut into the pot, and place the latter on the fire, adding salt, and, if you like it, a teaspoonful of cream. When melted, break the egg into it and keep stirring it round until it is thick. You should eat it out of the pot. This may not be an elegant arrangement, but it is a very nice one, and the egg thus cooked has a delicious flavour. I commend this method of preparing an egg to many people living alone in lodgings who may like to vary their "boiled egg" occasionally. It can be done on a spirit lamp very easily.

WHAT WILL MY BOYS BE?

SOMETIMES watch my boys at play,
And wonder what some future day
May bring to them of wealth or fame
(I dare not think of want or shame).
It may be they will take their stand
Among the noblest of the land,
Or, numbered with the wise and great,
May help to guide affairs of State.
I'd like to give them sunny hours,
A pathway strewn with fairest flowers,
And never one dark stormy day
Should come if I might have my way.
But yet within my heart I know
'Twould not be wise to have it so;
For trials and crosses must be given
If they are growing nearer heaven.
I'm glad it is not left to me
To choose just what their lot shall be,
But that a Father all Divine,
Whose love is wiser far than mine,
Will guide and guard my darling boys
Amid earth's sorrows and its joys,
And will not give a larger share
Of either than their strength will bear.
This most of all for them I plead,
Lord, keep them true in word and deed,
At all times standing firm and strong,
To hold the right or crush the wrong.
Like valiant soldiers of the cross,
Content to suffer shame or loss,
To put all worldly things aside
That Jesus may be glorified;
Then, better far than earth's renown,
My boys will wear a heavenly crown.

A. B. S.

Capes or short mantelets, such as is shown in Fig. 20, are the fashion for out-door wear, both for ladies and children just now. They are made in light-coloured cloth or silk, with a yoke and high collar, which is either braided or made of plush or velvet. Sometimes the cape is made of the same material as the dress, and this makes a nice finish to a costume, while the length varies, some being made long enough to cover the entire dress, while others are mere shoulder capes. The fitting square or rounded yoke and high collar must be lined with buckram mounted on silk before the pelerine part is set on. The outer edges are lined inside with strips of silk or Italian cloth, and the back is gathered at the waist and set into a waist-band on the inside.

A mantelet of the size illustrated will require two yards of forty-five inch material. The pattern can be supplied in any size.

Fig. 20.

Girl's Apron.

Fig. 21. This will be found suitable for a little girl from four to six years of age, and may be made in alpaca, holland, or any washing material. Three quarters of a yard of thirty-two inch material will be required, and three yards of trimming. The skirt is fourteen inches in length in front, and is cut all in one piece; the remainder of the material being used for the bib and pocket. The lace is used for the bottom of the apron skirt, the pocket, and bib.

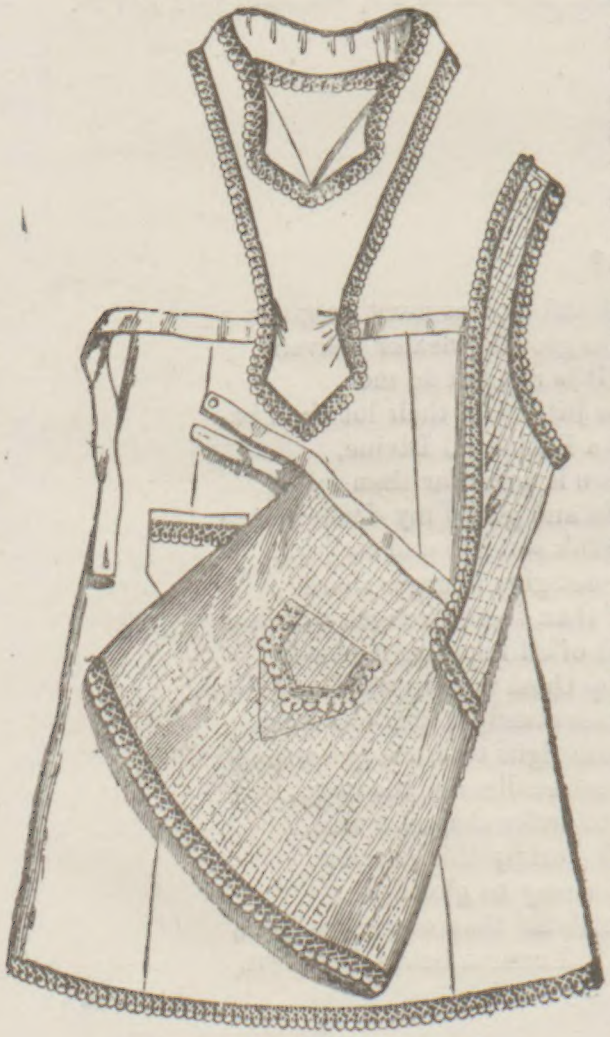

Fig. 21. Fig. 22.

Lady's Morning Apron.

Fig. 22. This pattern is made in holland and trimmed with lace. One yard of holland is required and three of lace.

The skirt is made of a width of holland three-quarters of a yard long, the remaining half-yard being used for the bib, pocket, and band.

Child's Pinafore.

Fig. 23. This little pinafore can be made in fancy muslin and lace, or, with the addition of sleeves, will make a morning blouse, when it would be best made in print or some stout material. The neck is run in three places, the gathers being secured on the wrong side, with a facing of the same stuff.

There are also three runners at the waist in the front of the pinafore, which are secured in the same way as those at the neck.

Fig 23.

Fig. 24 is made with a width of diaper gored, and has an extra piece about six inches wide let in down the front. This can be smocked or gathered with a few runners at the neck. A strip of insertion joins this to the gored piece, which is feather-stitched on either side. Straps of insertion form the shoulders, and embroidery edging trims the neck and armholes. A hem and tucks finish the bottom.

Fig. 24.

Fig. 25. This is a pretty design for diaper, or any of the fancy materials used for this purpose; which, though less durable than diaper, are less expensive and very pretty. Take a width and a half of material, and after sloping a little out for the armhole, shape the back and front to fit the yoke into which it is set with gathers.

Straps about two inches wide go over the shoulders and fix into the yoke. The pinafore is gathered at the waist in three places and secured on the wrong side; two shaped tabs join on here, to which a piece of material about four inches wide is joined to form a sash behind.

Flat patterns can be supplied, Fig. 20, 6½d.; Figs. 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25, 4½d. each. Address, "M. C. Pattern," 9, Paternoster Row, London.

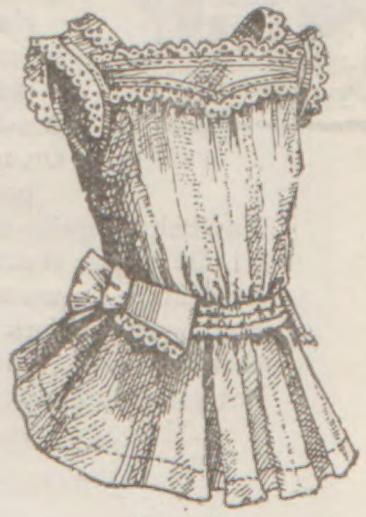

Fig. 25.